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ABSTRACT

Three Australian students who had moved from a small rural primary school to larger secondary schools were interviewed to examine how they experienced the transition. Although the larger environment at the secondary schools was a factor, the transition was not difficult with regard to social aspects, such as making new friends. The teaching and learning situation was significantly different, however. The students' primary school was a learning community characterized by a teaching and learning partnership of pupils, staff, parents, and community working, learning, and teaching together, in a dynamic interaction. At their secondary schools, these students reported something of a regression in relationships, as they were confronted with a teacher-as-teacher context, with control as the central component, in marked contrast to their experiences in primary school. The students felt that the nature of the teacher was central to the concept of a learning community and was more important than the size of the school. Ramifications for secondary schools are that learning communities can only develop when teachers, students, administrators, and communities are involved in an interactive process, and that teachers must re-examine their teaching practices and interactions to facilitate the learning community concept. (Contains 10 references.) (TD)

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A JOURNEY OF TRANSITION:

FROM GUMLY GUMLY PUBLIC TO SECONDARY SCHOOL

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A Journey of Transition:

From Gumly Gumly Public to Secondary School

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At last year's Conference, discussions with participants raised the question of the experience of children as they moved from Gumly Gumly to Secondary school. In particular, the issue posed was the transition from a small, rural learning community school, to the larger secondary context. Gumly Gumly is seen by many, within and outside the community, to be successful and an environment in which learning, by staff, students, and community, occurs. This is accompanied by a strong sense of ownership, by all stakeholders, of both context and content, demonstrated in a particular allegiance to the school and the learning partnership. Accordingly, to examine the influence of such an experience, we need to consider the longitudinal journey as the students move into the next phase of their education. In seeking to address aspects of this issue, a follow-up was conducted with a selected group of the students, and their parents, from the original study, to examine their perceptions of the transition. The paper presents their voices as they recount their 'journey'.

Introduction

Since 1995, I have been involved in an ongoing contact with the staff, students, and community of Gumly Gumly school. Initially, this focussed upon a study commenced under a general 'question' as to: *what is it that makes the school what it is, and how can this understanding be better used and translated into more effective learning for the school and its community?* In adopting this, we sought to start with a description of the culture of the school, then, through an action orientation use these findings to examine and reflect upon the situation, effecting strategies and processes of change and development as a result. This period of direct research has since been followed by frequent visits to the school, interaction with staff, students, and community, not only as a process of gaining further insight but also maintaining contact and making a contribution to the school.

From this developed the notion of this school as representing a learning community. As reported in greater detail elsewhere (Cocklin, 1998a, 1999), this was partly a result of the history of strong community involvement with the school, the sense of ownership of knowledge and the teaching/learning processes by staff, students, and community, and the particular approach to teaching and learning engaged in at the school. This latter aspect reflected the engagement of staff and students in a collaborative learning and teaching process, where the notion of community was a sense of working together, working with, wherein difference and even contestation are valued, and which placed particular emphasis upon the everyday lived reality of the school context. This notion of community, in terms of relationships and children learning, was most akin to 'going with the flow' which *"puts the emphasis on process, and involves intuition, spontaneity, 'tacit knowledge', enthusiasm and fun"* (Woods and Jeffrey, 1996:34).

Yet, as we presented these findings (see, Cocklin, 1997, 1998b), and the contact with the school continued, there were other aspects which remained to be considered. In particular, as we discussed the research, ourselves and others raised the question as to what happens when the students move on from Gumly Gumly. Given that this provides a particular teaching and learning environment, and more so an emphasis on ownership of interactions

within the school context and the wider community, the question remained as to how such students would experience the move to secondary school.

As well as these concerns from the research community, and the ongoing contact, impetus was provided when one of these students produced the following in 1998. Kylie, then in Year 7, was responding to a school assignment on 'environmental or hereditary factor which has influenced my health relating to my growth and development':

> *I think that school has had an important influence on me. Gumly Gumly Public school is a small school and this is where I went from Kinder to Year 6. The teachers made school feel like being at home and everyone liked going to school and doing their work because it was always fun. We could always talk to the teachers about anything and they helped you a lot if you didn't understand something. They knew everything about me and were my friends as well as my teachers. The children were like having lots of brothers and sisters and I learnt to understand other people and be nice to everyone even if I didn't really like them. I still go back to the school on special days even now I am at high school and when .... finishes for the year I will go to Gumly for a week and help Lower Division with their Xmas craft and their play. Lots of other children that used to go to the school there will do the same thing. This has influenced me a lot in the way that I see schools. I feel comfortable at school and I know that it is alright to like the teachers and help them as they are people too just like me. I know that it is alright if you aren't really brainy at school because everyone is brainy at different things and as long as you do the best that you can it doesn't really matter. I like to ask question but I know this is alright otherwise if I don't ask I won't know the answer. .... I feel safe at school and this is good because I will try hard to learn all the things I don't know yet although sometimes I forget to try hard. I think that if you are happy somewhere and people like you for yourself then you will try your hardest to do the best you can and not give up because you aren't as brainy as someone else.*

It was in light of these, that a decision was made to conduct an initial investigation using three of the students from the original 1995 study.

CASE STUDIES

As always, the exigencies of research realities, and time available, dictated that only a sample of those who had moved to secondary school could be the focus of the transition journey. Accordingly, three from the original investigation who could be readily contacted, and meetings arranged, were interviewed once during Term 3, 1999, and discussions were held with parents. They were now in their second year at secondary school, David at a non-denominational independent school (approximate roll = 300), Kylie and Nicole at a Catholic girls' school (approximate roll = 620). In this sense, they are perhaps not typical of the transition process experienced by the range of students as they move to secondary level, yet they do provide insight in the particular context. However, these can be considered best as representing particular case studies, rather than generic representations of the transition journey. For instance, the following figures illustrate the number, and destinations, of Gumly Gumly students in the period of my association with the school:

1996	4	Large State Secondary
1997	4	3 Independent Schools (the sample), 1 Large State Secondary
1998	5	1 Home schooling, 4 Large State Secondary
1999	2	Large State Secondary

The interviews took place, David and Kylie on separate occasions at Gumly Gumly school as providing the most available site for them after school, and Nicole at home. Each recorded interview took place under the notions of conversation reflecting on their experiences as they moved to secondary school, and comparing this to their expectations and primary school perceptions.

SIZE HELPS,

Two main issues were noted by the three participants, those of the size of the new environment, but more particularly the nature of the teacher and teaching.

As they came from a Primary with approximately forty students, and a large school grounds, it does seem tautological to note that size was an issue, but all three gave it some mention as part of the initial experiences and reality. However, there were differences according to background and experiences. For Kylie, it was somewhat of a shock:

> *Scary. It's so much bigger - there's hundreds of people, and you don't know anyone.*
> Were there things about Gumly which made it easier or harder?
> *Harder - because there's not many people here.*

Kylie had spent her entire Primary career at Gumly Gumly, whereas both David and Nicole had experiences at other, and larger, primary schools. Therefore, in accounting for transitions there would be expected differences according to these backgrounds. All three, on the other hand, did note that initially it was a process of meeting new people, and making new friends, as Nicole recounted:

> *It's got heaps of people, so there were heaps of people to make friends with. It was easy. I found it easy to change.*
> How did you find making friends?
> *It was easy.*
> What about those who came from bigger schools - did they already have their friends?
> *They did, but everyone was making new ones - like, those who had friends from big schools, weren't friends anymore - they were making new ones.*

Similarly, Kylie noted this process of making new friends, at first with others from small schools, but slowly spreading out across the secondary school:

> *You had to make new friends.*
> Was that harder or easier?
> *Easier I'd say. Because there were a lot of other people also looking for new friends as well. A lot of other people came from small schools and they were all looking for new friends.*
> Did the kids from the small schools tend to make friends together?
> *The kids who came from big schools already had their group - they had been friends. But everyone likes me [laugh]. Nicole's got a new group of friends - and I've got mine - but we're still best friends.*
> Did the kids from the small schools stay friends?
> *Yeah - but some have fights - all do, small and big school ones - and you make new friends.*

Both Kylie and Nicole were at a secondary school with approximately 620 students, while the experience for David was different:

> What was the experience like, from this school to a secondary?
> *I quite liked it. [....] college is a small school - about 300 students* [and includes both Primary and Secondary]- *but I suppose it would be more of a shock if you went to a bigger school. But, I really enjoyed it - it was a bit of a challenge.*

While the new environment included considerably more students, this appears to have been only an initial issue, as all three noted that they soon adapted, and made new friends. There might, however, be expected differences here, as they were all more gregarious than other students might be:

> *Yes - I think it depends too on the student - they can handle it differently, it depends on the*

> *friends they make and so on. But, I think definitely, this school* [Gumly] *helped with the transition. Certainly, one of the most important things is being an independent learner which was encouraged here. Then, you move into bigger classes and you have to be an independent learner, as well as being able to interact with the teacher - it's about 50:50 - you have to be able to work on your own, but you also have to be able to interact with the teacher to learn.* (David)

The experience, then, was generally a positive one, and one that their experiences at Gumly Gumly had prepared them for, not withstanding personal characteristics which may have facilitated making new friends and establishing relationships with other students. Even in this context, the nature of Gumly Gumly may have contributed as, unlike some other small rural schools, it does have a turn over of students, rather than a stable population. In short, during their time at Primary, all would have experienced the arrival and departure of new students, and the need to develop new friendships.

All reported that some of the situations at the secondary school also assisted in the transition. Nicole and Kylie stated that the provision of a common area for the Year 7 students allowed them to mix somewhat independently of the larger population, thereby aiding in the process of establishing friendships amongst peers while also diminishing the effects of the bigger crowds. David spoke of a particular situation in terms of the teaching arrangements which made the transition easier:

> *In Year 7 we had one teacher - one teacher taught us several different subjects - and then in Yr 8 they give us different teachers for different subjects. So, you were sort of brought in to it more slowly. This year, one teacher takes the students for English and History - so, there's not so many teachers - then you build up to different teachers for different subjects. I think it was an experiment last year, and this year they have extended it.*

After some initial anxiety, but alleviated by the preparation from Gumly Gumly, and facilitated by particular aspects of the secondary school - including the size and special arrangements, David, Kylie and Nicole all spoke of the transition as relatively straightforward. The big difference noted was in the teachers and teacher:student interactions and relationships.

BUT, TEACHER IS CENTRAL

The overall context of comment on the secondary experience of teachers and teaching was somewhat negative, and in terms of being a direct contrast to that of Gumly Gumly. As reported previously (Cocklin, 1997, 1999), the teaching and learning situation at Gumly Gumly was one where:

> *Each child was seen as an individual, and an emphasis was put on a caring and sharing relationship. The children were allowed to make mistakes, and encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and development. Both teachers were constantly alert for all the nuances of the experiences of the children, and were not averse to providing emotional support. The emphasis at Gumly Gumly was upon an individualised approach to learning, varied and interactive, collaborative, and contributing to creative learning.* (Cocklin, 1999: 283)

This partnership of teaching and learning involved pupils, staff, parents, and community and visitors, working together, learning and teaching together, in a dynamic interaction and relationship. The secondary school teachers were not seen in a similar light, as Kylie comments:

> *Heaps different. It was a lot easier when you just had the one teacher. Mr D always had time to listen to all of us - but the other teachers, they pick a favourite and a non-favourite - and Mr D never did that. Like, they pick someone they really like and give all their attention to them and just rule the other ones out - and they just say 'I don't care how much you try' - and you have to put in a hell've lot of effort just to get back in their good books and you haven't done anything wrong. That's happened to me so many times. I think they've just got sick of teaching so they're just going with the ones that have actually put in a little bit of effort and the ones that*

haven't they just throw them out.
Is there the same amount of individual or personal attention at secondary as was here?
Nope. Not at all. 30 people in the class. One of my classes is about the same size as this whole school.
How about talking with the teachers - like you did here?
It's easier to talk to Mr D because you know him much better - because you had him all the time. But, at secondary, the teachers you just stay with them for fifty minutes and then it's the next one. And you've got all these different teachers - so, it's a lot harder.
Did you learn easier with Mr D?
You learn more [at secondary]- *because you've got a whole lot of different subjects - but, with Mr D he would refer back to other subjects - and he'd like spend a whole day helping you - he'd never give up until you had learnt it. But, now we totally change the subject - we don't talk about the other ones.*
Did the relationship with Mr D make it harder going to secondary school?
Yep.

The students, then, came with particular expectations of teachers and the processes of teaching and learning. This involved a relationship of working together, and interacting as learners and teachers. As Casey, Kylie's mother, noted:

> *She expected to help out - to make the teachers a cup of tea, to carry things for them, to talk to them, just like she had done here* [Gumly Gumly].

As Kylie herself reported, she had some expectations that there would be a continuation of the type of interaction and learning:

> *I expected that they would go around and help everyone understand. Like, my old maths teacher* [secondary] *- he would write a couple of examples up on the board - wouldn't let us do it - and if you said 'I don't understand', he'd say 'are you dumb or something' and he'd yell at you. So, Mum rang up the school and got up him - he just wasn't a good teacher. I hated that class so much - I used to put on a sicky and go to sick bay - he was so dumb - he never caught on to it. The teacher now, she explains it. We worked in fours - in a group - and if you didn't understand it someone else could help you.*

So, in some aspects there were examples where learning did occur in a more collaborative fashion, but that this was dependent upon the teacher, and less 'common' than their prior schooling experiences had led them to expect. While these aspects represent a particular aspect of the learning community notion applicable at Gumly Gumly, and our knowledge of secondary schools may suggest that such close relationships would be somewhat unusual, perhaps it does suggest a need for secondary teachers to examine the ways in which they relate to students. This, it can be suggested, is of some concern given that the particular secondary school has been reported (see, Retallick, 1999) as involved in the learning community process. I would argue, then, that the notion of a learning community must seek to engage the pupils, and that to develop fully it cannot be limited to the teacher level. Certainly, the perception of Kylie and Nicole was one that a strict hierarchy of status, of teacher-as-teacher, and of control was more characteristic of the secondary context:

> *The teacher's aren't learning with us. They're not interested in us - they just can't wait until the end of the day - give us work, then that's it. Some of the teachers just come in, hand out worksheets, and then sit down at their desk and do other things - while we try and figure it out. But, Mr D he'd always explain it - no matter how many times you asked, he'd keep on trying. Here we worked together, but at secondary we're working on our own. He used to help us understand, but the teachers there, they don't. You can go through a whole semester not understanding it, but they don't care - they just want to get you out of the class.* (Kylie)

Nicole was even more outspoken in her perception of the teachers:

> *They're arseholes. Like, well, I got in trouble just for opening a door. I just opened it. And we're not allowed to wear nail polish, and not allowed to wear our socks short, and we can't wear more than 3 pieces of jewellery. Well, like, they'll pick some student and they'll pay more attention to them. Like, if they're having difficulty, they'll give them more attention but if you're in the middle they don't pay any attention to you at all.*
> Where you felt that was different at Gumly - that all individuals got attention?
> *Yeah - pretty much.*

For Nicole, while some teachers were seen as acceptable, the dominant position was one of control:

> *Well, some teachers are really nice - like, Mr ... let's us tease him and everything. Like, some teachers are alright, but others are just up themselves. Miss ..., you get three warnings - if you laugh a little bit, you get one warning, - but, she's a cow. It's just some teachers. Some are very strict on uniform - you can't wear a tank top out on sport - you've got to wear a shirt with sleeves. They are just picky about what we wear - we should be able to wear what we want.*
> So, it's fitting in to the rules?
> *Yeah. At Gumly we all just fitted in together - we all made up the rules.*

There were also significant differences in terms of the relationship as learners, and in the sense of 'control' over the student's own learning, which created concerns for Nicole:

> Are there more rules and regulations at secondary?
> *Yes! No freedom. To keep us under control. Because there's more of us, they are scared - like, if we found there was more of us we could overpower them.*
> But there were more of you at Gumly than the teachers? Did you ever feel that way there?
> *Nope! It wasn't boring there - we always had stuff to do - there's usually nothing to do at secondary school. Teachers are so strict. Nor do we get much selection on what we want to do - it's more compulsory stuff - not things we'd like to do - which won't even help us in the future, and we don't want to do them. If they let us learn things that we wanted to learn it would be better.*
> Does that mean you feel that you're not as much in control of your own learning as you used to be?
> *Yes. Pretty much gone backwards. They make us do a whole year of PE when we could've been doing another course that's more use to us. I don't get why we have to do PE - if you really wanted to do PE you should be allowed to, but if there's something else - it should be an elective. I'd sooner have done photography and stuff like that. And, with the HSIE stuff, like you used to choose what you wanted to do, now they make us do history and geography and stuff. I wanted to do commerce, but we can only do that as an elective - I wanted to do office procedures.*
> So, you feel your choices are limited?
> *Yes. They're getting more limited this year.*

Kylie summed up the situation in terms of teachers and relationships in the following:

> *Like, they've just got too many kids - in one class, to pay too much attention to one person. What they do, they pay all the attention to some - like, in English, she pays all her attention to this side of the class and if someone on the other side puts up their hand she just says 'oh, let's move on'.*
> But, if they were to spend the time with you, could they become more like here?
> *Yeah - I suppose. But, they're just all snobby there. Like, you just get to know them, and then you change teachers. Every year, you don't have the same teacher - it's really hard. If they just paid more attention to everyone, and didn't rule half the class out. I suppose it's also up to the kids - like, some of the kids don't want to learn and they muck up - so, the teachers pay most of*

the attention to them to try and get them to work. But, the kids who really need the attention - because they're stuck on something - they won't give it to them - because they're busy with the bad kids.
So, if the teachers did things differently, a bigger school could be more like it was here?
Yep. You kind of need to know the teachers for ages to like them. Like, I like some of my teachers, but because they just think 'you're just a student' - whereas here you could be more of a friend - there, it's they can be nice, then they can just turn really cranky and that's the end. Mr D could tell you off, but you were still friends. If they looked on you more as friends - not as someone they've got to teach - like, you get paid to teach them, and then you go home and forget about them. Like, one of my teacher's, she's good, you can talk to her, but the others they just think 'she's a student, I've just got to teach them and never see them again'.

For David, the situation was somewhat different. While noting that there were considerable differences in the relationships, he also noted that the teachers did work together, and that there was some continuity of interactions:

Another thing we talked about here, was the nature of the relationships between the teacher and the pupils - you said then that 'the teacher is always there with you, always there for you' - it was a 'friend relationship' - does that exist at secondary school?
I think it does, but not to the great extent it does here [Gumly]. *A school this size, you can't really not get to know your teacher, but I think it's up to the teacher. Depends on the person. Whereas, a larger school with more teachers it's not as great - it depends on the teacher.*
How did you relate to the teachers at secondary?
I was lucky - the teacher that took me for several of my subjects was really good. She continued it on pretty well. I don't have a problem if a teacher doesn't want to - as long as they are a good teacher - but, I think it followed on, but I had a good teacher.
So, the transition was helped by it being less of a difference than it might have been?
Yes.
Were there any sort of negatives about going from here?
I suppose the change in numbers of students - that was different. As you said, the teachers here get more involved with the students, and having teachers who didn't really want to do that was different. I mean, secondary school could really be a shock for some, but I didn't really have a problem. I really enjoy High School - it was a new challenge.

For all three, then, there was a difference noted in terms of the interaction and relationships with the teachers, and in general this was seen as a negative aspect of the secondary school. They noted a more hierarchical set of relationships, and similarly of knowledge and its compartmentalisation, of a focus on issues of control, rather than collaboration, and a greater sense of Balkanisation of culture.

SECONDARY SCHOOL AS LEARNING COMMUNITY?

The generic answer to this would be a no, and an emphatic one in general. As Nicole commented, there were considerable differences between the two experiences:

What would you change about secondary to make it more like Gumly?
Be able to wear different things - like, change the uniform a bit. If we don't want to do PE, we should be allowed to do something we want. Some of the freedoms we had at Gumly - it's just become stricter - they should be stricter with the young kids. We should be treated more like adults. We had more control at Gumly. I think I learnt more at primary school. I could actually be bothered to listen at primary. Partly because I was younger - and now I've got more interesting things to do - but partly because they treat you like children here. So pathetic.
It was easier to talk to everyone at primary. But, I also went to other schools, so I didn't find it all that different coming to secondary.
But, they give you more attention at this school than perhaps other secondary schools.

> *In Year 6 - we got to go around and test other kids and stuff - we don't do anything like that here. Now we only work with our own group. It was also a bit easier - like, Yr 7 got their own area, so while you were settling in you had your own area.*
> *Kylie and I still talk about things - like how at lunch time and that Mr D joined in with us - teachers here don't do that - we were joking with a teacher one day, and another one told us off - it was 'inappropriate'.*

Similarly, David noted that the secondary situation did not continue the notions of learning community:

> *As you said, the teachers here* [Gumly Gumly] *get more involved with the students, and having teachers who didn't really want to do that was different.*

All commented, too, on the differences between the utilisation of community members and other adults in the primary situation, as a central aspect of the notion of learning community (Cocklin, 1999), and the absence in the secondary school. One of the central strengths of the Gumly Gumly context was this wider involvement as David had commented while at primary:

> *The community, how it is involved in the school. We just have days when the community comes in and walks through - they always know something about Gumly Gumly School. .... It helps a lot with the students as well. The parents know the teachers, and they work in the school with reading and things like that.* (Cocklin, 1997: 7)

For both parents and students, a further aspect of the learning community school was that of the multi-aged context, and the collaborative learning this produced, again contrasted with the strong hierarchical and Balkanised situation of the secondary school.

Yet, it must also be noted that the participants were aware of the different contexts, and that this might restrict the wider involvement of parents in the secondary school, as David notes:

> *Definitely, the parental involvement [at Gumly Gumly] also helped. The parents enjoy having something to do with the school, and I think the students enjoy having their parents here.*
> That doesn't happen at secondary?
> *That doesn't happen to the same extent. I can understand that - at primary school there's lots of things the parents can help with - like reading and things like that. Things get more difficult at high school - and high schools don't seem to want to get them as involved.*
> As a secondary student would you like to see parents more involved?
> *Not really. Some of the students we have are really terrible.*

In this instance, David was commenting on some of the behaviours of some students, although he did also suggest that adolescence was a factor in not wanting parents involved to the same extent. However, this does not preclude the possibilities of involving others in the secondary context, one aspect which may contribute to a greater sense of learning community.

PREPARED FOR THE TRANSITION?

Did these three students consider that their experiences in a learning community school had prepared them for the transition to secondary school? This had a dual response, yes in terms of their development as individual learners, and in terms of the knowledge and skills, but in a sense no in that their expectations of on-going interactions and relationships with teachers were not fulfilled:

> *I think having the teacher here* [Gumly Gumly] *which you can interact with definitely helps you to move on and you can still understand teachers who treat you as a 'number'. But I think this school really helped with that. I learnt a lot more here. It depends on the teacher, but I think the size of the school means you can really get to know the teacher and learn a lot more. It does*

depend on the teacher. Definitely! (David)

For Kylie:

So, you feel the schooling you got here has helped you at secondary?
Yep. It's helped me understand what they're going on about - because it was a small school, Mr D always helped us so we knew lots more which has helped me now.
I like maths. I like cooking, I don't like religion, hate English, I don't like science, I like maths, I like history.
Any connection between the type of teachers and the subjects you like, and don't like?
Well, I used to like English because the teacher was great fun, but the teacher we've got now - she's using long words that you can't understand - and she's really old and got a bad voice - and can't yell, so everyone mucks up - she just can't control the class. I used to like the other teacher better, but she went away to have a baby. If the teacher's snobby and they ignore you I won't ever like them. Mr D wasn't like that - even when he yelled at you.

Certainly, they saw themselves as being 'prepared', and perhaps the self-concept as independent learner, and as learner-as-teacher, developed at Gumly Gumly (see, Cocklin, 1999), facilitated this process. Whether this is a case of 'more so' than in other primary contexts is beyond the scope of this paper to consider, but what is clearly indicated is that the nature of the 'teacher' is crucial in the processes of teaching and learning, and also in developing notions of the learning community school.

DIRECTIONS

From a small-scale study, and of three particular individuals, we can do little more than raise some speculative comments, and suggest areas for further consideration.

It does appear that the transition journey from the learning community school to the secondary, and the concomitant status passages (see, Cocklin, 1988; Measor & Woods, 1984), is not a difficult experience, at least as far as these three were concerned. That while the larger environment was a factor, this was overcome readily, and new peer relationships developed quickly. What was significantly different, however, was the teaching and learning situation. Overall, these students reported something of a regression in relationships, that they were confronted with a teacher-as-teacher context, with control as the central component, in a marked contrast to the teacher-as-learner, teacher-as-facilitator, and learner-as-teacher they had experienced at primary school. This seems to add further weight to the view that central to the learning community is the nature of teacher, and of teaching and learning relationships and interactions (see, Cocklin, 1999; Woods, 1999). Indeed, that this is the more important component than the size of the school.

It is this which I would suggest has particular ramifications for the secondary school, and for the further development of the notion of learning community. First, while there are always going to be differences between the primary and secondary contexts, size and content being two of many components, this should not preclude the development of a learning community in the secondary school. In order to do so, a focus needs to be established on the notion in its entirety, not one which sees this as something for teachers to develop. That a community can only develop when all are involved in an interactive process:

> *Our traditional concept that teachers teach, students learn, and administrators manage is completely altered. In a community of learners, everyone is about the business of learning, questioning, investigating, and seeking solutions. The basis for human interaction is no longer a hierarchy of who knows more than someone else, but rather the need for everyone to contribute to the process of asking questions and investigating solutions.* (Kleine-Kracht, 1993:392)

Second, that secondary teachers need to consider the effects of the hierarchy of knowledge and relationships, the Balkanisation of content and culture, and seek ways to reculture the context to facilitate the learning community notion. In so doing, perhaps there is something they can learn from the primary school situation, and some of

David's earlier comments would be applicable here. But, finally, and perhaps centrally, they need to examine their teaching practices, and interactions. Here again, the notions of creative teaching and relationship to learning community described in the primary school context would be appropriate (see, Woods, 1999). If, then, we are to continue to develop the notion of learning community, we need to consider this transition between contexts, and seek strategies for promoting it as a continuous learning experience, certainly throughout the schooling stages.

So, where to next? Three students from one learning community school provide us with an initial insight into the transition journey. Yes, they coped, and have continued to develop as learners. To some extent perhaps as a survival strategy confronted by a negative experience of teachers and teaching, but nevertheless have managed to continue their learning. To develop further insight we need a broader base of data on the transition process, from small rural schools, from larger primary schools, from learning community schools, and from others, and into a variety of secondary contexts. We also need to consider those secondary sites where learning community notions are in practice (see, Groundwater-Smith, 1999), and seek to build from these a better insight into the process at this level. Finally, we need to engage the notion of community - that it is something all are involved in, and develop more effective processes for involving, and accessing, student views and participation. In short, until we involve the students and teachers in a collaborative process of developing a learning community, we will always miss the goal.

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